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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DAR ES SALAAM 000363

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E JLIDDLE; INR/RAA FOR FEHRENREICH
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SUBJECT: TANZANIA BY-ELECTION: CCM WINS, CHADEMA RISING

REF: a: Dar es Salaam 340, b: 2008 Dar es Salaam 722

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11. Summary: Opposition Chadema mounted a serious challenge to ruling CCM in the May 24 by-election in Busanda, but was unable to overcome CCM's traditional strength in rural areas. The by-election results suggest growing support for Chadema as the primary opposition in mainland Tanzania, in particular in urban and semi-urban areas. Chadema's rise is at the expense of CUF, the other major opposition party, which saw its vote tally drop by 90 percent since 2005 in the district. Embassy Political Assistant and MCC Deputy Resident Country Director led a small observer mission, with representatives from the UK, Netherlands, and the European Community. Overall the election appeared well-organized, although Chadema complained about CCM campaign tactics. End Summary.

BACKGROUND

12. The Busanda seat came open after the death (of natural causes) of its MP, Faustine Rwilomba, a CCM back-bencher of no particular distinction. Busanda constituency is a primarily rural agricultural area in Mwanza region, south of Lake Victoria. The nearest town is the gold-mining center of Geita, site of one of Tanzania's most productive mines; there is also some small-scale mining in the district. Infrastructure is generally poor, especially in the rural sections. (Note: Busanda, which currently has no connection to the national electrical grid, is slated to receive transmission lines under the Millennium Challenge Compact.)

CANDIDATES

13. CCM's candidate, Lolensia Bukwimba, beat out 11 other party candidates in a contested nominating process. Some locals told us she had been chosen for her professional qualifications and educational attainment, although she was not the best-connected or popular among CCM leaders in the district. CCM campaigned vigorously, with numerous MPs from the region, the Ministers of Home Affairs and Energy and Minerals, and other top party leadership visiting the district. Based on news reports and the final day's rally, the candidate ran a generally positive campaign, promising to uphold the CCM manifesto and bring development to the constituency. CCM's main rally the day before the election turned out a few hundred supporters and other observers.

14. As in other recent by-elections, the opposition failed to unite around a single candidate; however, only Chadema seriously

challenged CCM. Chadema candidate Fineas Magessa ran on a platform of attacking CCM for incompetence, corruption, and failure to improve the lives of the district's people. Like CCM, Chadema brought its senior party leadership to the campaign. Its final rally, in the urban area of Katoro, drew an audience of more than a thousand. In the weeks before the election, numerous commentators predicted either a Chadema victory or a very close race.

¶15. Two other opposition parties, CUF and UDP, also ran candidates. Both parties failed to properly register their polling agents. As a result, they were not represented at any of the polling stations during the voting and the counting of the ballots. Although CUF national Chairman Ibrahim Lipumba represented the party during the campaign, it appears the party as a whole paid more attention to the by-election on Zanzibar (ref a), where its candidate had a more realistic chance at winning.

RESULTS

¶16. The final tally showed a clear but not overwhelming margin for CCM (29,000 votes, 54 percent) over Chadema (22,800 votes, 42 percent). Chadema won two urban wards by significant margins but was swept in the rural areas. CUF registered just under 1,000 votes and UDP less than 300. By contrast, in the 2005 elections, the CCM candidate took nearly 80 percent of the vote, with CUF and Chadema taking 11 and 4 percent, respectively. Only 41 percent of registered voters came to the polls, about average for by-elections. The new MP will bring the number of elected women MPs to eighteen, all but one from CCM. (Note: CCM has pledged to increase its female representation in parliament to 50 percent, but the mechanism for doing so remains unclear.)

CONDUCT OF THE CAMPAIGN AND VOTING

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¶17. A five-member diplomatic mission met with regional and local officials, including the Returning Officer in charge of election management, as well as the CUF and CCM candidates and party officials. We observed party rallies the day before the election and visited about ten percent of the 380 polling stations on election day.

¶18. According to news reports and discussions with party and electoral officials, the campaign was generally orderly. There were some reports of violence (allegedly by CCM against Chadema supporters). Electoral officials told us that Chadema allegations of CCM vote-buying (a common opposition theme in by-elections) and CCM assertions that Chadema had acted provocatively by burning a CCM flag had not been substantiated.

¶19. The balloting was generally well run. The election officials appeared to be knowledgeable and had the necessary supplies to conduct the vote. Some of the polling stations were makeshift and cramped, especially in the more rural areas. CCM and Chadema party agents were present in each of the stations. Urban voters tended to have a longer wait to vote but were otherwise unimpeded. We encountered several groups of youth in urban areas - Chadema supporters - who claimed they had registered but could not find their names at any polling station. Police presence was clearly increased in the district. Each cluster of polling stations had one unarmed officer, while the armed Field Force Unit conducted roving patrols. There were no reports of violence. We once saw a brief confrontation between a Field Force patrol and one of the groups of dissatisfied youth, but the incident resolved peacefully.

¶10. The final vote compilation was held up because the Chadema candidate failed to appear at the electoral office. After the results were announced, he rejected his loss and proclaimed his intention to take legal action. Chadema party leaders subsequently said the party would not join any legal challenge to the results, though they continued to criticize CCM campaign tactics. (Note: The candidate's unwillingness to concede echoed the outcome of the Tarime by-election [ref b], with the party roles reversed.)

COMMENT

¶11. Chadema's strong showing in a district formerly safe for CCM suggests that it will pose a serious challenge in an increased number of mainland constituencies in 2010, especially in urban areas, although CCM's hold on a substantial parliamentary majority and the presidency seems secure. The result in Busanda further suggests that Chadema has momentum on the mainland compared to CUF, which increasingly risks being seen as a Zanzibar party. Chadema will have a further opportunity to test its appeal as the mainland opposition vanguard on July 5. The final by-election before the 2010 general election will take place in Biharamulo, Kagera region, for a seat won by a formerly strong but now barely functioning opposition party, TLP.

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